Universal Religion.

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CONTRIBUTORS.

UNITED STATES

DAVID STARR JORDAN, LL. D.
Stanford University, Cal.
WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON, Boston
RABBI CHARLES FLEISCHER, Boston
JAMES H. WEST, Boston.
CHARLES FERGUSON, Kansas City.
JOHN W. ROBERTS, Fox Lake, Wis.
PROF. N. SCHMIDT, PH. D., Cornell Un'y

FOREIGN

PROF. OTTO PFLEIDERER, D. D.,
University of Berlin, Germany
REV. CHARLES VOYSEY, M. A.
Theistic Church, London
HON. TOKIWO YOKOI, Tokio, Japan
REV. CHARLES STRONG, D. D.,
The Australian Church, Melbourne
W. D. LESUEUR, LL. D., Ottawa, Can.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRISTIANITY.

PROSE-POEM—"LOVE." I Cor. XIII, vss. 1-8, 13.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,
But have not love,
I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal,
And if I have the gift of prophecy,
And know all mysteries and all knowledge,
And if I have all faith so as to remove mountains,
But have not love,—I am nothing.
And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,
And if I give my body to be burned,
But have not love, it profiteth me nothing.
Love suffereth long and is kind;
Love envieth not, love vaunteth not itself,
Is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly;
Seeketh not its own, is not provoked;
Taketh no account of evil,
Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but
Rejoiceth in the truth;
Beareth all things, believeth all things,
Hopeth all things, endureth all things.
Love never faileth . . .
But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three;
And the greatest of these is love.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS—FROM THE "NEW TESTAMENT."

MATT. V. 43-48, XXII. 35-40, I. John II. 7-10, 15-17.

PRAYER-SENTENCES

From the prayers attributed to Jesus.

Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.

Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom Thou hast given me. I have given them Thy word. I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. Sanctify them through thy word, thy word is truth. Oh righteous Father. I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do.

Father, the hour is come. If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will but Thine be done.

THE DISCOURSE.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."
—Matt. xxii:40.

The gospel of Judaism has been summed up in the phrase: fulfil the law of righteousness. That law consisted of a mass of rules,—civil, ceremonial, moral, religious—intended to cover every side of life. These rules, originally few and simple, were gradually expanded into the elaborate system of legislation which constitutes the "Pentateuch," edited about the year 450 B. C. But the Pentateuch in due time became the basis for still further legislation, witness the "Talmud," which consists of interpretation and development of what is prescribed in the "Torah" and which came to be regarded as having a like binding authority with the code attributed to Moses. The effect of this elaborate and voluminous system of legislation on Jewish thought and conduct was both beneficial and injurious. In so far as it furnished an external standard of moral action which all could understand and obey, and involved a strict, wholesome disciplining influence, the system was decidedly helpful. But, on the other hand, it proved to be injurious in that by its very externalism and formal character it drew the heart and will away from those inward sources of right conduct which are the highest and deepest man can have. By splitting

life up into innumerable details, providing a law for each, which it was sin to violate, making no distinction between kinds of sin or degrees of sin, holding that he who offends in one point of the law offends in all—a position clearly stated in the epistle of James (II. 10)—Judaism tended to despiritualize life, to regard goodness as conformity to an external standard of right rather than as an attitude of heart toward what is good and true, to make righteousness a garment that might be put on or off, rather than a constant, maintained habit of the soul. These and other injurious effects of Jewish legislation were frankly recognized and appreciated by Hebrew reformers as early as the seventh century before our era. The Deuteronomist, for example, writing about 620 B. C., published his passionate appeal for a devotion to the law that has its seat in the heart, the law itself being found there (Deut. xxx II. sq) Ezekiel and Jeremiah registered their intensely earnest plea for a new heart that would, out of reverence and love for Israel's God, practice that righteousness which is more than outward obedience to a set of prescribed rules. So again, at a still later day, the authors of Psalms XV, LI, CIX, and XXIV, belonging to the Greek and Maccabean periods, expressed the deeply felt need of "renewal of spirit" and the creation of a "clean heart," indicating that they fully appreciated the limitations of the system of legislation they revered. All the way from the Deuteronomist to Hillel, who was an old man when Jesus was an infant and the most distinguished legalist and scholar of his time, we find that there were those who recognized and gave occasional expression to this morality of the spirit which goes back of rules and regulations to the motives and aims of conduct and which is therefore deeper than the morality of conformity and compliance. But no one had sought to separate this spiritual righteousness from the system of legislation and lift it to a commanding place in the ordering of daily life. Let no one think that Judaism was deficient in spirituality. The literature between the Testaments bears abundant evidence of the fact that there was no lack of this grace in Judaism, even when its legalism was most elaborate and detailed; but no one had extricated the morality of the spirit, taught by the immediate predecessors of Jesus, from the mass of rules and raised it to the rank of

supremacy among the motives of right action. Had Hillel done this, he and not Jesus would have been the founder of Christianity. Hillel recognized clearly that the need of his time was just this extrication and enthroning, but he was too much steeped in the system of legislation to accomplish the reformatory task of isolating spiritual righteousness and making it the highest and main controling principle of action. It remained for Jesus to achieve this, thereby transcending the Judaism of his time and manifesting true originality. I admit with the eminent scholar, Rabbi Hirsch, that Jesus uttered no new moral maxims, that one can match every sentence of the sermon on the mount in contemporary or earlier Jewish literature. Nor does this reproduction of what others had said before him detract in the least from the essential greatness of Jesus; on the contrary, it is a mark of it. Granted that in method and in thought Jesus is a Jewish haggadist, that his ethics is as little absolute as that of any other teacher, that his similes are indigenous to the Jewish Midrash and of common occurrence in the picture language of the rabbinical homilies, that he was neither more universalistic nor less nationalistic than the synagogue of his day, that in none of these respects has Jesus the slightest claim to originality, yet it still remains true that the original reformer is not only he who first conceives a fruitful idea but also he who plants it in many minds and fertilizes it there through the persuasive power of his quickening personality. To this type of original reformers Jesus belonged. He preached the loftiest moral conceptions the race had won and vitalized them by his commanding, winning presence. Even as the transcendent merit of the tree consists in its drawing from the surrounding air, earth and water the materials wherewith to build the strength of its trunk and the beauty of its foliage, so the transcendent merit of Jesus lay in his drawing from earlier or contemporary literature the materials wherewith to make his gospel a source of strength and inspiration, stamping what he borrowed with the spiritual genius of his own wondrous personality. His "judge not that ye be not judged" reminds us of Hillel's, "Judge not thy neighbor till thou art in his place." Hillel said, "Whoso would make his name great shall lose it," which is but the earlier equivalent

of Jesus' saying, "Whosoever exalts himself shall be humbled." Again, Hillel's remark, "revile not when reviled," had its reproduction in "bless them that curse you." Both Hillel and Jesus enunciated the Golden Rule in substantially the same words. Consequently it is not here that we find the originality of Jesus, but it appears the moment we consider wherein he surpassed Hillel. Perceiving that the spirit behind an act is what gives it moral value, Jesus took it out of the mass of rules where Hillel had left it and made it the corner-stone of his teaching. Higher than the morality of obedience to that outward standard of Jewish Law is the morality of the spirit which cannot be gauged by any external measure at all. Higher than visible conformity to rules regarding what must be done and still more regarding what must not be done, is the invisible motive behind that conformity. Such was the contribution of Jesus to Judaism. His recognition of this truth, his isolation of it as a supreme commanding principle of action and his ever-recurring emphasis of it throughout his ministry marked a forward step beyond the limits of Judaism. Thus this spiritual righteousness, if so we may term it, this special gospel of Jesus, the morality of the spirit, was simply a reaction from the excessive externalism of the legislative system of his time and place, a system that crippled spirituality and tended to make men oblivious to the inward springs of all true morality.

And the genius of Jesus showed itself nowhere so much as in this, that he related his gospel to the Jewish Law and presented it as a development, an expansion and deepening thereof. 'Tis a sorry mistake to suppose that Jesus cut himself off from Judaism and sought to originate a new religion. On the contrary, he was born a Jew and remained a Jew all his life through. As such, he observed all the ordinances of the Jewish religion. He kept the feasts and fasts. (Mark xiv. 12) He declared that the rules and regulations of Jewish ceremonial law as expounded by the recognized authorities should be scrupulously obeyed (Matt xxiii. 2). He even went so far as to say that not one jot or little of that law would remain unfulfilled while heaven and earth remained. (Matt. v. 18). Lest any one should think him a reckless, ruthless iconoclast, a negative revolutionist in religion, he said: "Think not

I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, I am come to carry them out.'' And he might have added to develop, expand them, to bring out their latent deeper meaning,—for this was precisely what he did. ''Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old,'' quoting from the twentieth chapter of Exodus, ''thou shalt do no murder.'' ''But I say unto you that whosoever is as much as angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.'' It is not enough, he contends, to obey the sixth commandment, not enough to stop at the law of murder, you must go down to the source of murder in the passion of anger in the heart, that it may be utterly consumed and thus no more provoke to murderous deeds. As with the sixth commandment so also with the seventh. It is not enough to refrain from the adultrous act, you must go down to the source of it in the evil desire of the heart; there lies the root of the sin and duty regarding it calls for its extirpation. Purify the inner springs of conduct, be not content with avoidance of evil deeds, remember that the act itself does not so much constitute evil, as the prompting of the heart that leads to it; not the killing but the wrath, not the adultery, but the lust. Again: ''Ye have heard that it hath been said thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy, but I say unto you love your enemies, bless them that persecute you, pray for them that despitefully use you.'' Here Jesus quotes no specific passage from the Old Testament but in his own words expresses what the actual attitude and spirit of Jewish ethics was prior to his day. True, the Old Testament had enjoined love toward one's personal enemy but nowhere in its pages do we find love toward national enemies inculcated. On the contrary we observe the logic of the worship of Yahweh as Israel's God and of the belief that Israel is his chosen people, led directly to hatred of foreigners as an inevitable consequence of this unique Jewish privilege. The prophets, notably Jeremiah, the Deuteronomist, and especially the author of the one hundred and thirty-ninth psalm feel hatred of foreigners to be not only inevitable but praiseworthy. In unqualified opposition to this attitude and spirit Jesus pleads for a cosmopolitan love that shall extend beyond one's personal enemies to the hated Romans and all other gentiles; and in so plead-

ing he made a distinct advance upon the position taken throughout the Old Testament. Hillel, it is true, had uttered the same sentiment but he did not raise it above the level of Jewish legalism. It remained for Jesus to lift it out of the mass of rules and make it the master-principle of the moral life, addressing not the reason, nor even the emotions, as many think, but only the will. Jesus rightly divined that the subtlest intellectual hair-splitting does not, of necessity, rouse the will nor does the most ardent appeal to the emotions, for the emotions, while easily fanned to a flame, as quickly "cool their ineffectual fires." Therefore all the exhortations of Jesus are addressed directly to the will, each man being regarded as responsible for his conduct, standing face to face with God and dealing with Him alone. When the tricky lawyer asked him (Matt. xxii, 35) which of all the commandments in the law is the greatest, Jesus answered by quoting two verses; one, from the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy and the other from the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus, the two together inculcating love to God and love to man, adding "all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments." In other words, Jesus would say, whosoever succeeds in obeying these two commandments has in him the spirit out of which all right actions will spontaneously flow.

Thus the gospel of Christianity, as derived from Jesus, does not consist in righteousness alone, obedience to an external standard of conduct, but rather in what we may call spiritual righteousness, or the **morality of the spirit,** which sees in love for God and for all men as children of the same Father, the inward source of all right action. Of this gospel there are hints and suggestions in the literature between the Testaments but no one had succeeded in giving it special and continual emphasis, no one had detached it from the existing Jewish legal system and made of it a new moral issue. This is what Jesus did and it constitutes his gospel and the gospel of Christianity through him. According to Jesus, each human soul is a child of God, endowed with power to come into perfect harmony with him and the desire for that harmony is the motive for doing what is right. The reason why men should do what is right is that they "may become

sons of their heavenly Father," become worthy of their kinship with God. Hence the ideal life, according to Jesus, is the life of the spirit, the life of union with the Eternal Life and this gives to morality its highest possible sanction. The supreme commandment of Jesus is "be ye perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect." In that utterance Jesus gave infinite significance to every humblest human being, because it implies that there are infinite possibilities in every child of God. Imitate the Divine example. God's love is unbounded, unrestrained, impartial; it is symbolized by the sunshine and the rain, given alike to the just and to the unjust. Reproduce that love in your own human experience. Love the idolatrous and the unlovely, love the unrighteous; out of very love for the heathen, for the hated Romans, the haughty oppressors, pray for them. Such was the meaning of his command and the nearest approach to it in the Old Testament is the sentence, "Be ye holy, for I, Yahweh, your God, am holy" (Leviticus xix. 2). But when Jesus said, "be ye perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect," he rounded out the earlier injunction, he brought out what was implied in it and uttered the very highest spiritual command known to man. But what is more, he lived it. Be doubtful what may concerning the authorship of sentences and chapters in the first three gospels, which constitute our chief reliable source of information, this "synoptic" account of Jesus' life leaves one unmistakable impression upon us, namely, that he practiced what he preached, lived his gospel of love, made his own life his greatest teaching, squared his conduct with his ideals.

The highest consciousness a man can have is that of his own divine origin, the realization that in the line of animal evolution his ancestry reverts to God, and that the mark thereof is in him. Jesus felt this sense of Divine origin and relationship so deeply that it transfigured every humblest, lowliest service he was called to render, lifting it to a sublime height. When he washed the feet of his disciples—perhaps the supreme act of his life—he symbolized therein the secret of successful service. The lower strata of society can be lifted to higher levels only by those who, like Jesus, know they come from God and in that consciousness go down to serve, to touch

the Divine in the degraded. Truly do such souls transfigure their helpfulness by the way in which they give it, i. e., with a spiritual grace and charm of which they are quite unconscious, even as they wist not that their faces shine and that their pure and perfect service is an inspiration to those less successful than they. Given that consciousness of the Divine, that presence within the heart of a truly God-like love, and there can be no human soul so degraded as to resist its influence. This, I take it, was the contention of Jesus and exemplified in his own dealing with every type of "sin-stained souls." To-day we are just beginning to appreciate the significance of his teaching and example in the work of reform. The redeeming power of a deeply spiritual love,—who can measure it? If we are fine enough, if we have enough of the heart-culture that was in Jesus, success in our efforts at reform is as certain as it was with him. If we fail, it can only be because we are not yet fine enough, because the divine element does not yet shine out clearly enough from us, because our love still lacks purity, or patience, or strength, or depth, or wisdom; it is not yet sufficiently God-like and therefore success is not yet ours.

The gospel of Christianity, then, as inherited from Jesus is wholly concerned with the individual soul and its living the life of God, reproducing in its own measure the Divine Love. This was the all-absorbing passion of Jesus. The problem of improving the political and social conditions of his oppressed fellow-countrymen in no wise concerned him, for he believed that by a miracle from on high the long-expected Kingdom of God, or commonwealth of man, would come on the earth and in less than twenty-five years (Mark xiii. 30) Jesus, therefore, was not a socialist as is sometimes claimed. He came not to readjust external conditions but to refine men's hearts and to quicken in each soul the sense of its divine origin and its infinite possibilities. And when he coupled with this gospel the Messianic belief in the speedy advent of a new order of society, a Kingdom of God on earth, to be miraculously established, in which only justice and love would reign, and of which the poor, the oppressed, the despised and the meek would become members, he brought to the Roman empire the one thing it needed, a message that literally transfigured life

for the thousands who were enslaved and who were greatly in the majority. The slave, abject in his lot, the property of another, could now feel that despite his chains, he was a person, that God loved him, that Jesus was his friend, that there was consolation in his words, that though a slave, there was something within him which could not be bound; his soul was his own, he might be scourged but the lash did not touch his heart, he might be slain, but the door of the kingdom of heaven was open to him. He felt superior to his position, he lived in an ideal world and felt that by virtue of Jesus' gospel of love and of the "Kingdom," he was one of the great family of God's freemen. So woman, whose condition was degraded, felt that new worth was given to womanhood by the gospel of Jesus. Her body might be abused, but her soul could not be outraged; she might be beaten to death, but she could join the noble company of the pure in the heavenly kingdom. Thus did the gospel come as a balm and benediction to the Roman masses and when later on it made its way to central and southern Europe where neither the gospel of the Epicurean,—advocating the pleasures of the hour,—nor the gospel of the Stoic, —inculcating quiet endurance, nor the example of Marcus Aurelius,—trying to hold up the falling empire by living himself a noble, worthy life—; when none of these proved efficacious to solve the problem of the age, the gospel of Jesus, of the morality of the spirit and of the kingdom of heaven, captured and transfigured the world. Judaism as represented by Hillel and Gamaliel was unequal to the task required. Jesus transcended that Judaism and laid the foundation of a new religious movement by lifting the spirituality of Judaism out of its legal environment to the plane of an independent force, making it the dominating principle of conduct. Not only did he emphasize the morality of the spirit, but he transferred the soul's devotion from an outward, objective standard of law to an inward subjective tribunal; a conscience freed, enlightened and inspired by the thought of a Divine Father whose love is to be reproduced in human life and whose absolute perfection is to be made the infinite goal of human aspiration.

It remains only to indicate the relation of the Apostle Paul to Christianity, inasmuch as it was he who instituted the

new religion, by relinquishing hold on circumcision and Jewish ceremonial in general, by fixing thought and sentiment upon the person of Jesus as the Redeemer, rather than on obedience to a mass of precepts, and by constructing a framework of dogma that was intended to define and explain in terms of theology the spiritual righteousness taught by Jesus. Paul's position was, in brief, as follows. Man cannot fulfil the law of righteousness as prescribed by Judaism for there is a law in his nature ever warring against the higher law, causing him to do evil when he would do good. What, then, is there to save him from this dreadful plight? While pondering the problem there came to Paul the belief that there was one soul, of whom he had heard, but whom he had never seen in the flesh,—Jesus of Nazareth,—who did succeed in fulfilling the law of righteousness and who out of compassion and perfect love took it upon himself to serve as the Redeemer, through his own perfectness, of sin-stained man. The simple story of Jesus' life had not yet been recorded in any of the gospels. There was as yet nothing but oral tradition. For why write any life of Jesus when it was expected that any day or moment he would return on the clouds to earth and establish the Kingdom of God? To Paul then, there came the story of the wonderful life of Jesus and he at once exalts it and makes it the cornerstone of his system of faith. Here in this one divine human being, who enjoys perfect at-one-ment with God, man may find the means whereby he, too, can fulfill the law of righteousness. Jesus the Christ, the second Adam, thought Paul, is our intercessor, the mediator through whom imperfect man may be freed from sin and made one with God. Such was Paul's solution of the problem how to fulfil the law of righteousness and upon this solution the new religion was founded. When, therefore, the question is asked what makes one a Christian and not a Buddhist, or a Parsee, the answer is, "belief in the Lord Jesus Christ;" i. e., belief in the exceptional character of Jesus, as one who differed from all other men in kind as well as in degree, who alone of all men was able through his perfection, to fulfil the law of righteousness and thereby became the fitting instrument to bring humanity into at-one-ment with God. This belief is the distinguishing characteristic

of Christianity as one of the great religions. This belief is what it has in common with no other religion and therefore determines specifically what constitutes one a Christian. While therefore the gospel of Christianity as derived from Jesus makes "love" its key-note, the contribution of Paul, as the founder of organized Christianity, causes us to add "creed" as expressed in the words, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

EDITORIAL.

"**September**" placed on the first page of this issue was an accidental error of the printing office. This is not a "double-number," though the mistake makes it appear to be such. The vacation-period extends from July to September inclusive. This is the October number.

Delinquent subscribers would confer a great favor on the treasurer by sending in their subscriptions prior to November first. Since our publication first appeared, fourteen years ago, we have kept out of debt. Let the record be maintained!

Life is an unstable equilibrium and nothing less than constant vigilance and consecrated effort can secure it unto us. The instability is quite as essential as the poise, and any undue emphasis of either leaves the problem still unsolved. Let the instability be more to us than the equilibrium and we grow unreliable and impulsive; reverse the relative importance of the two factors and we become prosaic and uninteresting. Hence the need of eternal watchfulness and increasing endeavor. Given these and we solve our problem afresh every day.

The soul's deepest craving is not to secure happiness and avoid suffering. Rather is it to have Joy, which is more than any happiness and which may involve pain.. The joy of new knowledge acquired, the joy of deepened love revealed, what would we not suffer and endure for these! Every forward step on the infinite road of knowledge, each new revelation of an eternal personal love means that our life has grown fuller, richer, completer than before, and to make it ever more and more such,—at whatever cost of struggle, hardship and pain,—is joy, is the deepest craving of the soul. Rather than

be oblivious to the meaning and mystery of the world, what intellectual tribulation would we not endure; rather than remain unaware of those revelations that come from the deeps of personal love, what agonies would we not go through! Hence they are wrong who say that our deepest craving is the attainment of happiness and the avoidance of pain. Deeper than these is Joy, rarely gained but by some measure of suffering, yet not to be foregone at any price.

A Criticism Retracted. In the preceding number of this monthly we compared the agnostic character of Confucianism to what we supposed was a similar feature of the Ethical Culture movement. A recent conference with the distinguished leader of that movement, Prof. Felix Adler, has made it painfully apparent to us that we have seriously erred in our judgment of the movement, and we take this first opportunity to retract our criticism, sincerely regretting our sin of commission and deeply grateful for the illuminating conference that brought the truth to light. The Ethical Movement is not an "agnostic" movement. It does not stand pledged to any one of the various theories of the universe—theistic, atheistic or agnostic. It is peculiarly an ethical movement, for it insists upon keeping ethics to the fore and making theology and philosophy wholly subordinate considerations. The leader of an Ethical Society may or may not be theistic; but he must be concerned with ethics, with the task of elevating the moral life. This he must keep constantly in the forefront of his addresses and practical undertakings. If such a leader be a theist and he should wish to hold "theistic services" for the spiritual helpfulness they may afford, he is perfectly free to meet for that purpose with such of his constituency as share his view, only he must beware of committing the society as a whole to theism, because the movement unites men not on the basis of any theological or philosophical opinions, but solely upon the basis of the ethical impulse to live the moral life. Whosoever would live upward toward truth of thought, feeling and conduct, whatever be his theology or his philosophy, is eligible for membership in a Society for Ethical Culture. The movement recognizes no other test of fellowship and accords to its leaders the utmost freedom compatible with this

primary and essential aim,—the elevation of the moral life. In the light of these facts it is obvious that the kinship of the ethical movement with that of the "Free Churches of Universal Religion" is much closer than we imagined. Indeed the only difference between them lies in their respective attitudes to the issue of sectarianism. The former waives the question of sectarian affiliations altogether, admitting to its membership Christians, Jews, Buddhists, etc.; Presbyterians, Baptists, Unitarians, etc., trusting the gradual elevation of the moral life of humanity to produce the annihilation of those sectarian rivalries and differences that still keep men apart, whereas the latter movement plants itself on a non-sectarian basis to begin with, outside of Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and all other sects, large and small, inviting to its fellowship all free or non-sectarian individuals who wish to live upward, who aim at "the realization of the highest moral ideal of humanity, both in the individual and in society." Apart from this single point of difference the two movements are identical. Both make the moral ideal, the moral impulse and purpose their supreme concern. Both believe in the principle and method of freedom in the pursuit of truth. Both are religious organizations in that both fulfill those functions which the world identifies with religion. Are they not destined to coalesce on some common platform and so gain the strength and inspiration that come from union and co-operation?